Dress code for Hindus in Afghanistan

546. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA:
SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA:
SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:
SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Taliban regime has issued a decree asking Hindus in Afghanistan to identify themselves by wearing yellow cloth and follow shariyat or face prosecution and that Hindus and Muslims cannot live in the same house;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto and the steps taken to safeguard the religious and social freedom of Hindus in Afghanistan;

(c) whether the International Human Rights Commission has been approached in this regard;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(e) whether Government would consider to take up the matter with the friendly foreign countries for an honourable settlement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) Government has seen credible reports that the Taliban have issued a decree prescribing wearing of distinctive clothing and distinguishing symbols by Afghan Hindus and Sikhs. The decree seeks to impose new restriction on Afghan Hindus and Sikhs. Afghan Hindu males have been debarred from wearing a salwar kameez or a white turban. They have been directed to wear a black cap and put a red tilak as a identification mark. Hindu women too have been asked to drape themselves fully in yellow cloth and wear an iron necklace whenever they move out of their homes. All Hindus are also required to display a yellow flag on their houses. Muslims and Hindus have been debarred from residing in the same house.

Government has taken a serious view of the Taliban decree. We have deplored and condemned the decree, which patently discriminates against minorities.

The Taliban decree is further evidence of the backward and obscurantist ideological underpinnings of the group. Taliban attempts to justify such orders

on religious grounds are also reprehensible. Taliban's edict justifies the action that the international community has taken in imposing sanctions on the Taliban through resolutions such as UNSCR-1333.

Government has also raised the issue of Taliban's decree in its interaction with members of the international community, bilaterally as well as in the UN. Consequently, there has been widespread condemnation by the international community of the Taliban's decree, including from the UN Secretary General, European Union and the US.

The matter will be appropriately taken up by the Government in the 58th session of the Commission on Human Rights in March/April, 2002.

Depicting Sikkim as a Nation on Chinese Website

547. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item under the caption China lists Sikkim as Asian Nation on website which appeared in the Asian Age on 14th April, 2001;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the action proposed to be taken at diplomatic channels to keep the record straight?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) We have taken up with the Chinese side the issue of their incorrect depiction of Sikkim. We have pointed out that their position on Sikkim, an issue related to India's sovereignty and territorial integrity, is not in conformity with their own stated objective of seeking goodwill and friendship with India, and is not in keeping with the principles of Panchsheel. It gives rise to misgivings in the minds of the Indian people, Parliament and Government and adversely affects the process of building trust and confidence. We have also conveyed to the Chinese side that we expect them to acknowldege the reality of Sikkim as an integral part of India. This would help promote development of friendly, cooperative, good neighbourly and mutually beneficial relations between our two countries.